

BWW Review: EVERY BRILLIANT THING at Illuminated Stage Theatre Company

Opening production at the Perkinson Center for the Arts and Education

by Susan Haubenstock Sep. 20, 2021



In a collaborative debut the Perkinson Center for the Arts and Education hosts its first production by its new resident professional troupe, The Illuminated Stage Theatre Company.

It's a lovely synergy at the new theater, which is attractive and comfortable, with excellent acoustics. And the production welcomes theatergoers who have spent many months without in-person programming.

The play on offer is "Every Brilliant Thing," written by **Duncan MacMillan** with **Jonny Donahoe**. Macmillan wrote the piece first as a short story, then as a monologue, and Donahoe collaborated to realize the work as a play. It's a one-actor piece that premiered in 2014 and was a hit at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, going on to success in London and New York.

Here director Julie Fulcher-Davis presents the show with the radiant Louise Keeton as the Narrator, and the result is touching and magical. The play is structured to rope in a variety of audience members--some onstage, some shouting from the auditorium--to round out the cast. Under Fulcher-Davis' guidance, Keeton is so appealing that patrons are pleased to help.

The moving story is of a child who tries to save her suicidal mother by listing all the brilliant things there are to live for. We see the girl progress through adolescence and college into adulthood, continuing to notice and appreciate the wonders of life even as her

mother's mental health remains precarious.

Sweet, sentimental, funny and sad, the play is consistently engaging. It's a triumph for Keeton, who shares her warmth generously. Fulcher-Davis is credited for the simple set and costumes, and there's a fine lighting design by Gretta Daughtery. Beautiful projections and music augment the production.

The palpable humanity Illuminated Stage creates from these simple elements augurs well for the future of this facility and this company. May there be more.

"Every Brilliant Thing" through October 3

At Perkinson Center for the Arts and Education

11810 Centre Street, Chester

Tickets: \$40 (students \$25)

Info: illuminatedstage.org or (804) 748-5555

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